

**Political History Collection
Interview H.0013.03 : Tape 3**

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Interviewed by: Paljor Tsarong
Name: Lhatsun Labrang Chandzö [Tib. lha btsun bla brang phyag mdzod]
Gender: Male
Age: ca. 64
Date of Birth: ca. 1928

Abstract

Lhatsun Labrang Chandzö [Tib. lha btsun bla brang phyag mdzod] was a well-known and capable monk who worked as a manager/steward. In this interview, he discusses the People's Association of 1952.

Tape 3

Q: Now I think this is right after the investigation. Let me read a bit of what you said. You said that they were saying that there was no need for you to have these meetings since the government is trying to do their best. Anyway, since you had met, please tell us how you had meetings. You had to give a statement, right? The interview read, "since a statement had to be given, our leader Chandzö Thamchö Sonamla, said that this petition was handed in by all the people. If a statement has to be given, then please send an edict [all over]." Now I didn't understand these words very well. Let me read it, "From the upper regions where the plant cardamom is harvested to the lower regions where Chinese women weave satin" I didn't understand very well what that meant.

A: Now this is an allegory. Round cardamom is a medicine that we call in Tibetan [Tib. dza ti]. It is used for treating depression or stress. I think it is grown somewhere in the Ladakh region and it has to be threshed just as ears [of grain] are harvested by threshing, so maybe there were some leaves or skin on the round cardamom. So probably these were hit with a stick and the cardamom remains.

So it was said that from the place where cardamom is threshed, down to the place where the Chinese women weave satin. It seems that the satin weavers were women in China. So it means up to the borders of these areas all the people are in the organization. Therefore it was said, "From the upper regions where the plant round cardamom is harvested to the lower regions where Chinese women weave satin". At that time, we had said this and we did have [people from these areas] and so because of that we said to please send them [all] an edict.

Q: So you said to them please send this edict since you had people from all over Tibet. So what they said was, "Did we give you a edict when you met the last time, right? Therefore you have to make the statement in the proper manner." I didn't understand this properly when they said, "the last time you all met, did you get a edict?"

A: Yes.

Q: So, they said that you guys just make petitions like that and it's not that we can't reply to them, you know?

A: It was not so much that they couldn't make replies, but they meant that it was not a situation where they cannot issue the verdict. Anyway, it was nothing. For example, people like thieves were lashed when being interrogated [Tib. tsha 'dri] if they did not confess. So they meant that they can do something akin to that to us also if we do not hand in the statement nicely. So it is better to hand in the statement in a proper way.

Q: So what does this mean? That the last time you all met did we gave you a edict?

A: Yes, they said that. That when you all first met did we give you an edict? If not, then you had better make a proper petition. It is not that we cannot issue a verdict. We can. So what did I say, regarding this?

Q: You said now at Kalimpong there were the 13 traders. Was this an association? Was it some Asia thing? Association means

tsokpa, so was it some traders?

A: Yes, they were traders. The wool was sold by a group of 13 traders. Usually each one sold independently. The wool was given to the Group of Thirteen and they sold it. The reason was to get a better price so that some don't sell cheaper than others. So it was the 13 bigger ones. The smaller ones gave their wool to them and since the ones who sold it were one entity, then they could get a better price. So regarding this, they said something like Asia Sogseshen. I don't know what language it was. [I think he means Association or Society]

Q: Yes. So you went to Kalimpong at that time and during this time the verdict was issued. Let me read what you said as it was not very clear to me. It said that "regarding the people's meetings, the Chinese are suspicious regarding the friendly relations between Tibet and China. That you had the meetings without really understanding the situation and that in the future you are not allowed to meet. The complaints that you have made are because you have no experience in such matters and because you had no understanding. And so since you did not understand there is no punishment. But in future you are not allowed to meet." So was it something like that?

A: Yes, it was something like that.

Q: Do you want to add anything to that? Something that I have left out?

A: Well, the matter [Tib. don dag] is like that. "The government is talking to them, so you all don't have to do anything. However, since you have already done it without understanding this, next time it is not permissible for you to do it". The reason being that when the people were meeting, it would raise the suspicions of the Chinese.

Q: Another thing. You said that it was either in 1953 or 1954, and that you were not sure. However since you were in Tö at that time, there was talk about Kamekhang Chöndze going to America.

A: I doubt that you will require that.

Q: After that, Chandzö Ngawang Tembala and Tsa Drunyi and others were imprisoned at the Tromsigang. So at that time was there some talk of going abroad. I didn't understand the reason for that.

A: Oh, that. You are not to blame. It is not a talk that I heard well. It was just some talk I heard. It is most probably just some internal talk and not known outside [Tib. phyi gyar]. Anyway, it is true that they were caught. Since they were members of the organization and they thought that there may be some who were going abroad, out of this kind of suspicion [Tib. nam rtog], they were arrested. But internally, when we asked what the hell happened, it was said that whether there were people who were really going to go or not was not known, but that some sort of talk of going was said. And so suspicions were raised.

Q: So if they did say that they were going to go abroad, then were they going to go and make relations (with U.S. or India)?

A: It must be. It has to be. So if you mention this, I think it is best to say that some of them sort of wanted to go, but nobody knew who was going to go or who told them to go and since they were members of the organization who had meetings, out of suspicion they were arrested.

Q: So when was this?

A: I think it was about the 9th or 10th month of 1953. In 1954 they met, Alo Chöndze, Bumthang Drunyla and others.

Q: The verdict that was issued saying that in future you cannot have such meetings was at the Ewang, right?

A: Yes, in the Ewang, the verdict was issued.

Q: So in that, you mentioned about a tsondu hragdu. Who was in this meeting.

A: Probably when this meeting took place, it was the higher ranking ones (who attended). Then I think the monastic representatives also came.

Q: Oh, you are talking about the government tsondu hragdu, I see.

A: Yes. So at the government tsondu hragdu the verdict was issued. So after the verdict was issued, do you have the story of what was said in response.

Q: Like the 4 articles and the 2 sub-articles?

A: Yes, like these articles, if the Chinese persist then we cannot do ...if we can...then we will agree to ...

Q: When you said Kyabje Rimpoche, are you talking about your labrang's lama?

A: What was in that?

Q: You said that earlier there was a problem with the government and Sera and that since Kyabje Rimpoche's health was not strong. So I was wondering who was Kyabje Rimpoche.

A: Oh, this is not required. How did it get there?

Q: You mentioned about Chushigandru and that at Markyang there were a lot of people who were killed. So was there a big fight

there?

A: Yes. About 500 Chushigandru came and went via Nyemo and from there to Markyang and Shang Ganden Chöngor. Before reaching Markyang, Chushigandru came along with two Chinese [defectors]. One was Lobsang Tashi and then there was another one. The other Chinese got lost [vanished] at Chushul. It seems that he went to Lhasa and then told the Chinese. So when they crossed the pass from Lhasa to Nyemo via Tölung on the motorable road, at Markyang they stopped the vehicles and the shooting began. They said that there were 600 or so vehicles. They might have fought in the place where there were some ruins. Since there were so many Chinese, some of our people were killed.

Q: So during this time you were passing close by.

A: I think they must have arrived at Markyang on the 5th. I must have arrived on the 9th or 10th, I don't remember. I came down from Shigatse and one has to come to Markyang to go to Lhasa. So it was at that time, I saw some black figures and they said that this was what happened. It is said that your Kungö Chemmo [Tsarong] was staying around Darjeeling and he came. I was in Tölung and met him at the river.

Q: This was in 1958, right? He was returning, right?

A: Yes. He purposely came to Tibet, you know. Amazing, such people. Otherwise, there was no need for him to come. He could have just stayed at Darjeeling. Seems nobody asked him to come. He said that he has to serve and must go back. In addition to that it seems that when the Dalai Lama asked him when he was returning he may have said, 'I'm coming soon, or something like that. So I met him and greeted him and he said, "See you Chandzö" .

Q: Now, we have come to 1959. You went to various places doing the Laja office's work, e.g., to Shang, Gyatso, Panam, etc, etc. Then you got to Shigatse in the 12th month. Then during the 1st and 2nd month you said the situation was not good and people were not allowed to move in and out of Shigatse. What was the situation and why there was no movement?

A: During this time at Shigatse, telegrams and "phones" were not working. Travelers were not allowed because the uprising was probably about to take place at Lhasa and so there were not allowing these.

Q: So they were not allowing anyone to go to Lhasa?

A: They were not allowing them to go to Lhasa and from Lhasa they were not allowing people to go on the road to Shigatse.

Q: What about from Shigatse to India?

A: That too they were not allowing.

Q: Some say that if one had to go to India then you have to ask for a pass. When did this begin?

A: This started earlier. You know the part in the story when I went to Kalimpong. Even by that time they were saying one has to take a photograph and have a pass. You have to take a letter and there is a road at Yadong. There they ask for it and look around.

Q: Later, there was a People's Association with Alo Chöndze and others. What was the relation between the 1952 People's Association and that one?

A: No relation at all.

Q: What year did they start?

A: In 1954. They even distributed a letter saying that there was a lot of help from India and that those who were there should do something. Otherwise, we had no connection.